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THE JUBILEE

THE "PEASANT REFORM"
AND
BROLETARIAN-PEASANT
REVOLUTION



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III

THE JUBILEE

THE “PEASANT REFORM”
AND
PROLETARIAN-PEASANT
REVOLUTION

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This translation of Lenin's *The Jubilee* and *The "Peasant Reform" and Proletarian-Peasant Revolution* has been made from the text given in the 17th volume of Lenin's *Works*, 4th Russian Edition, prepared by the Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin Institute of the C.C., C.P.S.U.

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THE JUBILEE

The fiftieth anniversary of the so-called Peasant Reform suggests many interesting questions. Here we can only touch upon some of the economic and historical issues, and shall have to leave sociological themes, as such, to another occasion.

Ten or fifteen years ago, when the disputes between the Narodniks and Marxists were first carried into the broad public arena, their different evaluations of the so-called Peasant Reform time and again occupied one of the foremost places in their controversies. To the theoreticians of Narodism—the well-known Mr. V. V. or Nikolai—on,¹ for instance—the principles of the Peasant Reform of 1861 were something fundamentally different from capitalism, and fundamentally inimical to it. They affirmed that the Statute of February 19 had legalized the “allotment of means of production to the producer,” had sanctioned “folk production” as *distinct from* capitalist production. They regarded the Statute of February 19 as an earnest that Russia’s evolution would be *non-capitalistic*.

Already then the Marxists countered this theory with a fundamentally different view. The Statute of February 19 was one of the *episodes* in the replacement of the serf (or feudal) mode of production by the bourgeois (capitalist). There were *no other* historico-economical elements in the Statute, according to this view. "Allotment of means of production to the producer" was an empty high-flown phrase which obscured the simple fact that the peasants, as agricultural small producers, were being converted from producers with a principally natural form of economy into commodity producers. How strongly or weakly commodity production had developed in the peasant economy in the various parts of Russia at that time, was another question. But it was unquestionable that the "emancipated" peasant was entering the conditions of commodity production, and no other. Hence, the "free labour" *substituted** for serf labour was nothing but the free labour of the wage worker or independent small producer in the conditions of commodity production, that is, in bourgeois socio-economic relationships. That this was the character of the Reform was brought out even more saliently by the *redemption payments*, for the redemption payments stimulated

* To the extent that there *actually* was such *substitution*—we shall see below that this substitution was a far more complicated process than might appear at first sight.

the money economy, that is, increased the dependence of the peasant on the market.

The Narodniks regarded emancipation of the peasant with land as a *non-capitalist* principle, as the "foundation" of what they called "folk production." Emancipation of the peasant without land, they regarded as a capitalist principle. The Narodniks (especially Mr. Nikolai—on) based this view on *the teachings of Marx*, maintaining that the freeing of the worker from means of production is a fundamental condition for the capitalist mode of production. It is a noteworthy fact that in the 1880s (if not earlier) Marxism had already become such an undeniably, such an actually predominating factor among the advanced social theories of Western Europe, that in Russia theories hostile to Marxism dared not for a long time come out in open opposition to Marxism. These theories sophistically distorted and falsified Marxism (often unconsciously); they themselves, as it were, took the stand of Marxism, and sought "according to Marx" to deny the applicability of Marx's theories to Russia! The Narodist theory of Mr. Nikolai—on claimed to be "Marxist" (1880s-1890s), and later the bourgeois-liberal theory of Messrs. Struve, Tugan-Baranovsky & Co. began with an "*almost*" complete recognition of Marx, developing its views and preaching its liberalism under the guise of a "further critical development of Marxism." On

this peculiar feature of the development of Russian social theories since the close of the 19th century (and down to present-day opportunism—Liquidationism, which fastens upon Marxist *terminology* in order to disguise its anti-Marxist substance), we shall probably have to dwell again and again.

What interests us at the present moment is the Narodist evaluation of the "Great Reform." It is fundamentally erroneous to think that the desire to deprive the peasants of land in 1861 was a capitalist desire, and the desire to allot them land, an anti-capitalist, socialist desire (the best of the Narodniks regarded the term "folk production" as a pseudonym for socialism, necessitated by the restrictions of the *censorship*). This view is preposterously anti-historical, the transplantation of a "ready-made" Marxian formula (a "formula" only applicable to highly developed commodity production) to a *feudalist* soil. In reality, the depriving of the peasants of land in 1861 signified in the majority of cases the creation not of a free worker in capitalist production, but of a *tied* (that is, a semi-serf or even an almost fully serf) *tenant* of the same land of the "master," the landlord. In reality, the "allotments" of 1861 signified in the majority of cases the creation not of a free and independent farmer, but of a tied tenant, *bound to the soil* and virtually compelled to perform the same old corvée

service, in the form of cultivating the landlord's fields with his own implements in return for the use of pastures, meadows, essential arable land, etc.

To the extent that the peasant was really, and not only nominally, emancipated from feudal relationships (their essence is "labour rent," i.e., work performed for the landlord by a peasant who has been assigned an allotment), to that extent he entered the domain of bourgeois social relationships. But this *real* emancipation from feudal relationships was a far more complicated process than the Narodniks thought. The struggle between the advocates of depriving the peasant of land and the advocates of "allotting" him land was *at that time* in many cases only the reflection of a struggle between two *feudalist* camps, a dispute as to whether it was more advantageous to the landlord to have a tenant (or "labour-rent" peasant) entirely without land of his own, *or* a tenant "with an allotment," i.e., bound to his locality, tied to a patch of land from which he cannot live and has to seek "outside earnings" (that is, sell himself in bondage to the landlord).

And, on the other hand, it is unquestionable that the more land the peasants had received on emancipation, and the more cheaply they had received it, the more swiftly, broadly and freely capitalism would have developed in Russia, the sooner the survivals of the feudalism and serfdom

would have disappeared, the more extensive the home market would have been, and the more secure would have been the development of towns, industry and trade.

The Narodniks' error was that they viewed the question utopistically, abstractly, unrelated to the concrete historical situation. They declared the "allotment" the basis of independent small-scale farming: *to the extent* that this was true, to that extent the "land-allotted" peasant became a commodity producer, fell under bourgeois conditions. *Actually*, however, all too often the "allotment" was so small, so burdened with excessive levies, its boundaries were marked off so inconveniently for the peasant and so "conveniently" for the landlord, that the "land-allotted" peasant inevitably fell under conditions of hopeless bondage, virtually remained a serf, and performed the same old corvée service (under the guise of leasing land for labour rent, etc.).

There was thus a twofold trend in Narodism, which the Marxists defined at the time when they spoke of Liberal-Narodnik views, of a Liberal-Narodnik evaluation and so on. To the extent that the Narodniks begilded the 1861 Reform, forgetting that the "assigning of allotments" in a host of cases actually meant ensuring the landlords' farms cheap labourers tied to the locality, the cheap labour of bondsmen, to that extent they sank (often without themselves

realizing it) to the standpoint of liberalism, the standpoint of the bourgeois liberal, or even the liberal landlord—to that extent they objectively became advocates of the type of capitalist evolution which is most burdened with landlord traditions, which is most connected with the feudal past and emancipates itself from it most slowly and with the greatest difficulty.

To the extent, on the other hand, that the Narodniks did not idealize the 1861 Reform, and ardently and sincerely advocated the smallest possible payments and the largest possible, absolutely *unrestricted*, “allotments,” and the maximum cultural, legal and other independence for the peasant, to that extent they were bourgeois democrats. Their only shortcoming was that their democracy was by no means always consistent and determined, its bourgeois character, moreover, remaining unrecognized by them. In our country, let it be said incidentally, even the most “Left” social-Narodniks not infrequently understand the word “bourgeois” in the above-mentioned combination as something in the nature of . . . a “policy,” when, in reality, the term bourgeois democracy is, from the Marxist standpoint, the only accurate scientific definition.

This twofold—liberal and democratic—trend of Narodism was already quite clearly *in evidence* at the time of the 1861 Reform. We cannot stop here for a more detailed analysis of these trends

—in particular, of the connection of utopian socialism with the second of them—and shall simply point to the difference in the political and ideological trends of, say, Kavelin on the one hand and Chernyshevsky on the other.

If one casts a general glance at the change in the whole order of the Russian state in 1861, one has to admit that the change was a step towards the conversion of a feudal monarchy into a bourgeois monarchy. This is true not only economically, but also politically. To convince oneself of the truth of this, it is enough to recall the character of the judicial, administrative, local government and other reforms that followed the Peasant Reform of 1861. One may argue whether this “step” was big or small, swift or slow, but the *direction* of the *step* is so clear, has been so thoroughly elucidated by the whole course of subsequent development, that there can scarcely be two opinions about it. It is all the more necessary to emphasize this *direction* because one so often nowadays hears the ill-considered assertion that it is only in very recent years that Russia has taken any “steps” towards conversion into a bourgeois monarchy.

Of the two mentioned trends of Narodism, the democratic, the one relying on the intelligence and independent action of other than landlord, bureaucratic and bourgeois elements, was extremely weak in 1861. That is why matters did not

go farther than the smallest "step" towards conversion into a bourgeois democracy. But this weak trend already existed even then. It also manifested itself later, now strongly, now feebly, both in the sphere of social ideas and in the sphere of the social movement of the *whole* post-Reform period. This trend grew stronger with every decade of that period, nourished at every step by the economic evolution of the country and, consequently, by the whole aggregate of social, legal and cultural conditions.

Forty-four years after the Peasant Reform, both the trends which were only just taking shape in 1861 have found fairly full and open expression in the most diverse spheres of social life, in the various vicissitudes of the social movement, in the activity of the broad masses of the people and of big political parties. The Cadets² and the Trudoviks³—understanding both terms in their broadest sense—are the immediate heirs and successors, the direct vehicles of both the trends which were already in outline half a century ago. The connection between 1861 and the events that developed forty-four years later is indubitable and obvious. And the fact that in this half-century both trends have survived, gained strength, developed and grown, unquestionably testifies to their potency, shows that they are deeply rooted in the whole economic structure of Russia.

The *Novoye Vremya* writer, Menshikov, has

expressed this connection between the Peasant Reform and the events of the recent past in the following characteristic ejaculation: "1861 failed to prevent 1905—why, then, shout about the *greatness* of a reform which has failed so miserably!" (*Novoye Vremya*,⁴ No. 12512, January 11, "An Unneeded Jubilee.")

Menshikov, in these words, inadvertently touches upon the extremely interesting scientifico-historical question, first, of the relation of reform to revolution generally, and, second, of the connection, dependence, affinity between the socio-historical trends, aspirations and tendencies of 1861 and 1905-07.

The concept reform and the concept revolution are undoubtedly antithetical; forgetfulness of this antithesis, of the borderline dividing the two concepts, constantly leads to the most serious errors in all historical judgments. But this antithesis is not absolute, this borderline is not something dead, but living and mobile, which one must know how to determine in each concrete case. The Reform of 1861 remained only a reform because of the extreme weakness, unenlightenment and incohesion of the social elements whose interests demanded change.

That is why the feudal features of that Reform were so strong, why it was so outrageously bureaucratic, and why the miseries it caused the peasants were so immeasurable. Our peasants

suffered far less from capitalism than from the inadequate development of capitalism.

But this Reform, which remained a reform because of the weakness of certain social elements, created, notwithstanding all the obstacles and handicaps, the conditions for the further development of these elements—conditions which broadened the basis on which the old contradictions were being played out, extended the range of the groups, sections and classes of the population which might take a conscious part in the “playing out” of these contradictions. Thus it was that the representatives of the democratic trend in the 1861 Reform, the trend consciously hostile to liberalism, who at that period (and for a long time after) seemed to be isolated individuals without any ground beneath them, *proved*—when the contradictions that had been almost in embryonic state in 1861 had ripened—to have been infinitely better “grounded” in actual fact. Those contemporaries of the 1861 Reform who regarded it from the reformist standpoint, proved to have been better “grounded” than the liberal reformists. History will always remember the former as the progressive men of their day, and the latter as men who were irresolute, supine and impotent in face of the forces of the old and obsolescent.

The Narodniks, ever since 1861 (and their predecessors even earlier, before 1861), and then for more than half a century, always preached in

their theories a *different, i.e., non-capitalist*, path for Russia. This was an error which history has completely refuted. History has fully shown—and the events of 1905-07, the actions of the various classes of Russian society in that period, have very graphically confirmed—that Russia is developing capitalistically, and that her development cannot follow any other path. But he would be a bad Marxist who had not yet learned from the history of this half-century what was the *real* significance of this half-century's desire, wrapped in an erroneous ideology, to direct the motherland along a "different" path.

A comparison of 1861 and 1905-07 makes it perfectly clear that the *real* historical significance of the Narodist ideology consisted in contrasting *two* paths of *capitalist* development: the one path would adapt the new, capitalist Russia to the old, subordinate the former to the latter, and retard the pace of development, while the other would replace the old by the new, completely eliminate the outworn obstructions to the new, and accelerate the pace of development. The programmes of the Cadets and the Trudoviks, as liberal and democratic programmes respectively—for all the inconsistency, and at times confusion and blindness of *both*—saliently reflect this development of *real* paths, both of which are confined *within the bounds* of capitalism, and which have been un-deviatingly pursued for more than half a century.

And the present period makes it particularly imperative that we have a distinct understanding of the conditions of both the one and the other path, a clear idea of the two trends of 1861 and their subsequent development. We are witnessing a further advance of the whole order of the Russian state, *yet another* step towards its conversion into a bourgeois monarchy. This new step, which is just as uncertain, hesitant, unsuccessful and untenable as its predecessor, confronts us with the old questions. Which of the two paths of Russia's capitalist development will finally determine her bourgeois order, history has not yet decided: the objective factors upon which the decision depends have not yet worked themselves out. It is impossible to foresee what that decision will be until we have had practical experience of all the frictions, clashes and conflicts which constitute the life of society. It is impossible to foresee what will be the resultant of the two trends that have been in evidence since 1861. But we can—and should—achieve a clear understanding of both the one and the other trend, and see to it that the Marxists (and this is one of their tasks as the "hegemons" amid the chaos of disintegration, disunity, scepticism and worship of momentary successes) make their contribution to the determination of this resultant not in negative form (like liquidationism and all helpless drifting into this or that species of demoralization gener-

ally), but in positive form, by upholding the interests of the evolution as a whole, its fundamental and most essential interests.

In moving towards their goal, the representatives of the democratic trend continually waver and fall into subjection to liberalism. To prevent these waverings and end this subjection is one of the most important historical tasks of Marxism in Russia.

Mysl, No. 3, February 1911

Signed: *V. Ilyin*

THE "PEASANT REFORM" AND PROLETARIAN-PEASANT REVOLUTION

The Jubilee, which the Romanov monarchy so much feared, and over which the liberals of Russia gushed so sentimentally, has now been celebrated. The tsarist government celebrated it by assiduously circulating "among the people" the arch-reactionary jubilee pamphlets of the National Club, by assiduously arresting all "suspicious" persons, by banning meetings at which speeches of even the slightest democratic tinge might have been expected, by fining and stifling newspapers, by banning "seditious" cinema films.

The liberals celebrated the jubilee by once more shedding a tear over the necessity for "a second February 19" (*Vestnik Yevropy*⁵), by giving expression to their loyal sentiments (the portrait of the tsar on the first page of *Ryech*⁶), by complaining of their civil dejection, the fragility of the native "Constitution," the "fatal break-up" of the "ancient rural foundations" by the Stolypin agrarian policy, etc., etc.

Nicholas II, in a rescript to Stolypin, declared that the crowning point of the "Great Reform" of February 19, 1861, was in fact the Stolypin agrarian policy, that is, the giving over of the peasants' land to robbery and plunder by a handful of parasites, kulaks, rich muzhiks, and the placing of the countryside under the rule of the feudal landlords.

And it must be admitted that Nicholas the Bloody, the first of the Russian landlords, is nearer to the historical truth than our high-souled liberals. The first landlord and chief feudalist realizes—or rather, has learned from the admonitions of the Council of the United Nobility—that elementary truth of the class struggle that "reforms" carried out by feudalists must of necessity be feudalistic in character, must of necessity be accompanied by a regime of utter violence. Our Cadets, and our liberals generally, fear the revolutionary movement of the masses, which is alone capable of wiping out the feudal landlords and their almighty power in the Russian state; and this fear prevents them from realizing the truth that so long as the feudalists are not overthrown, no reform—and especially agrarian reform—is possible save in a feudalistic form and of a feudalistic character and manner of execution. To fear revolution, dream of reform and whine that in practice "reforms" are carried out by feudalists and in a feudalistic way, is the

limit of baseness and stupidity. Nicholas II is far more correct, and far more effectively teaches the Russian people sense, when he "offers" the plain choice: either feudal "reforms," or the overthrow of the feudalists by a people's revolution.

The Reform of February 19, 1861, was a feudalistic reform, which our liberals are able to gild and represent as a "peaceful" reform only because at that time the revolutionary *movement* in Russia was weak in the extreme, while among the oppressed masses no revolutionary *class* yet existed. The Ukase of November 9, 1906, and the Law of June 14, 1910,⁷ are feudalistic reforms with a similar bourgeois content as the 1861 Reform—but the liberals *cannot* represent them as a "peaceful" reform and cannot so easily gild them (though—in *Russkaya Mysl*,⁸ for instance—they are already beginning to do so), because one may forget the few isolated revolutionaries of 1861, but one cannot forget the revolution of 1905. The year 1905 saw the birth in Russia of a revolutionary *class*—the proletariat, which succeeded in enlisting the peasant masses, too, in the revolutionary movement. And when, in any country, a revolutionary class is born, it cannot be suppressed by any persecution; it can only perish if the whole country perishes, it can only die victorious.

Let us recall the basic features of the Peasant Reform of 1861. The notorious "emancipation" meant the unscrupulous robbery of the peasants, and subjected them to an endless succession of tyrannies and insults. In celebration of the "emancipation," *over* one-fifth of the peasants' land was filched in the Black Earth gubernias. In some gubernias the peasants were robbed of as much as one-third and even two-fifths of their land. In celebration of the "emancipation," the peasants' lands were so marked off from the landlords' that the peasants were simply settled on "sand," and the landlords' lands were driven like wedges into those of the peasants, so as to make it easier for the noble gentry to enthrall the peasants and rent them land at usurious prices. In celebration of the "emancipation," the peasants were compelled to "redeem" their own land, and, moreover, were forced to pay *double or treble* its real price. Generally, the whole "reform era" of the 1860s left the peasant poverty-stricken, downtrodden, ignorant and under the thumb of the feudal landlords in the courts, the administration, the schools, and the zemstvos.

The "Great Reform" was a feudalistic reform, and could not have been anything else since it was carried out by feudalists. But what power compelled them to undertake the reform? The

power of economic development, which was drawing Russia into the path of capitalism. The feudal landlords were unable to prevent the growth of commodity exchange between Russia and Europe, could not bolster up the old, crumbling forms of economy. The Crimean War revealed the rottenness and impotence of feudal Russia. Peasant "riots" grew more prevalent with every decade preceding the emancipation, compelling the first landlord, Alexander II, to recognize that it was better to emancipate *from above* than to wait and be overthrown *from below*.

The "Peasant Reform" was a bourgeois reform carried out by feudalists. It was a step towards the conversion of Russia into a bourgeois monarchy. The substance of the Peasant Reform was bourgeois, and this was the more evident, the *less* land was filched from the peasants, the *more fully* the land of the peasants was separated from that of the landlords, the *less* the tribute (i.e. "redemption") paid to the feudalists, and the *freer* from the influence and pressure of the feudalists the peasants became in the various parts of the country. *To the extent* that the peasant escaped from the sway of the feudal landlord, *to that extent* he came under the sway of money, came under the conditions of commodity production, fell into subjection to nascent capital. And after 1861 capitalism in Russia developed at such speed that a transformation which in some of the

old European countries had taken centuries was accomplished in only a few decades.

The celebrated struggle between the feudalists and the liberals, which is so magnified and glorified by our liberal and liberal-Narodnik historians, was a struggle *within* the ruling classes, mostly within the *landlord* class, and was *exclusively* a struggle as to the extent and forms of the *concessions* to be made. The liberals, like the feudalists, stood for recognizing the property and power of the landlords, and indignantly condemned any revolutionary idea of *abolishing* their property and of *completely overthrowing* their power.

Such revolutionary ideas could not but ferment in the minds of the serf peasants. And though centuries of slavery had crushed and stultified the peasant masses to such an extent that at the time of the Reform they were incapable of anything but disunited, sporadic revolts or, rather, "riots," unenlightened by any political consciousness, there were, on the other hand, revolutionaries even then in Russia who took the side of the peasantry and were cognizant of the utter narrowness and wretchedness of the notorious "Peasant Reform" and its thoroughly feudalistic character. These revolutionaries, extremely few at that time, were headed by N. G. Chernyshevsky.

February 19, 1861, marked the beginning of a

new, bourgeois Russia, which had been growing out of the feudal era. The liberals of the 1860s and Chernyshevsky were representatives of two historical trends, of two historical forces, which since then and to this day are determining the issue of the fight for the new Russia. That is why, on the fiftieth anniversary of February 19, the class-conscious proletariat must realize as clearly as possible the essence of these two trends and their inter-relation.

The liberals wanted to "emancipate" Russia "from above," without abolishing the tsarist monarchy or the proprietary rights and power of the landlords, and only urging them to make "concessions" to the spirit of the times. The liberals were, and are, ideologists of the bourgeoisie, which cannot reconcile itself to feudalism, but fears revolution, fears a movement of the masses that is capable of overthrowing the monarchy and abolishing the power of the landlords. The liberals, therefore, confine themselves to a "fight for reforms," a "fight for rights," in other words, for a division of power between the feudalists and the bourgeoisie. With such an alignment of forces, there can be *no* "reforms" save such as are carried out by the feudalists, *no* "rights" save such as are restricted by the arbitrary will of the feudalists.

Chernyshevsky was a utopian socialist who dreamed of a transition to socialism through the

old, semi-feudal peasant community, and who did not see, and in the sixties of the last century could not see, that only the development of capitalism and the proletariat could create the conditions and social forces for the achievement of socialism. But Chernyshevsky was not only a utopian socialist. He was also a revolutionary democrat, and was able to influence all the political developments of his time in a revolutionary way, pressing—through all the obstacles and barriers of the censorship—the idea of peasant revolution, the idea of a struggle of the masses for the overthrow of all the old powers. The “Peasant Reform” of 1861, which the liberals first gilded and then even glorified, he called an *infamy*, because he clearly detected its feudalistic character, clearly saw that the liberal emancipators were stripping the peasants to the skin. Chernyshevsky called the liberals of the 1860s “*praters, braggarts and jackasses*,”⁹ because he clearly discerned their fear of revolution, their spinelessness and servile kowtowing to the powers that be.

These two historical trends steadily evolved in the half-century since February 19, and diverged ever more distinctly, definitely and determinedly. The bourgeois liberal-monarchist forces, who preached contentment with “cultural” work and shunned the revolutionary underground, grew stronger. The democratic and socialist

forces likewise grew stronger—at first mingled together in a utopian ideology and in the intellectualist struggle of the Narodnaya Volya and revolutionary Narodism, but beginning in the nineties of the last century to diverge with the transition from the revolutionary struggle of terrorists and isolated propagandists to the struggle of the revolutionary classes themselves.

The decade before the revolution, 1895-1904, was already witnessing the open action and steady growth of the proletarian masses, the growth of the strike struggle, and the growth of the agitation and organization of the Social-Democratic workers, and of their party. Following the socialist vanguard of the proletariat, the revolutionary-democratic peasantry also began to rise in a mass struggle, especially from 1902 on.

In the 1905 Revolution, the two trends which in 1861 were only just beginning to show signs of life, were only scarcely beginning to be foreshadowed in literature, developed, grew and found reflection in a movement of *masses*, in a struggle of *parties* in the most diverse fields—in the press, at meetings, in associations, strikes, uprisings and in the State Dumas.

The bourgeois liberal-monarchists formed the parties of the Cadets and Octobrists,¹⁰ who originally (until the summer of 1905) had lived together in one zemstvo-liberal movement, but

then separated into different parties, which strongly competed (and still compete) with each other, the one presenting a principally liberal, and the other a principally monarchist "*face*," but which have always been at one in the most essential, in rebuking the revolutionaries, jeering at the December uprising, and bowing before absolutism's "constitutional" fig-leaf as before a banner. Both parties took, and still take, a "strictly-constitutional" stand, i.e., confine their activities within a framework which the Black Hundreds of the tsar and the feudalists might provide without surrendering their power, without relinquishing their autocracy, without sacrificing even a penny of their "time-hallowed" slave-owner revenues, nor the tiniest of their "honestly earned" rights and privileges.

The democratic and socialist trends divided off from the liberal, and dissociated themselves from each other. The proletariat organized and came out separately from the peasantry, rallying around its working-class Social-Democratic party. The peasantry was infinitely worse organized in the revolution, its actions were much more disunited and feebler, its class consciousness was on a far lower level, while monarchist illusions (and the constitutional illusions inseparably connected with them) not infrequently paralyzed its energies, brought it under the subjection of the liberals, and sometimes of the Black Hundreds,

prompted it to futile dreaming about "God-given land" instead of launching an assault on the landed gentry with the object of abolishing that class altogether. All in all, nevertheless, the peasantry, as a class, fought the landlords, acted in revolutionary fashion, and in all the Dumas—even the Third, with its basis of representation mutilated in favour of the feudalists—formed Trudovik groups which, despite their frequent vacillations, represented the real democracy. The Cadets and Trudoviks of 1905-07 expressed in the mass movement and represented politically the position and trends of the bourgeoisie—the liberal-monarchistic on the one hand, and the revolutionary-democratic on the other.

1861 gave birth to 1905. The feudalistic character of the first "great" bourgeois reform hampered the development, condemned the peasants to thousands of the worst and bitterest torments, but it did not alter the trend of the development, nor did it prevent the bourgeois revolution of 1905. The 1861 Reform postponed the denouement by providing a certain vent for capitalism, by permitting it a certain degree of growth, but it did not avert the inevitable denouement, which was played out in 1905 on an incomparably broader stage, in an assault of the masses on the autocratic power of the tsar and the feudal landlords. The reform that was carried out by the

feudalists at a period when oppressed masses were entirely undeveloped, gave birth to a revolution by the time the revolutionary elements among these masses had matured.

The Third Duma and Stolypin's agrarian policy represent a second bourgeois reform carried out by the feudalists. If February 19, 1861, was the first step *towards* the conversion of a purely feudal autocracy into a bourgeois monarchy, the period 1908-10 witnessed a second and bigger step *in the same direction*. Nearly four and a half years have elapsed since the Ukase of November 9, 1906, more than three and a half years have elapsed since June 3, 1907,¹¹ and now not only the Cadet bourgeoisie, but to a large degree the October bourgeoisie as well, are becoming convinced of the "failure" of the June 3 "Constitution" and the June 3 agrarian policy. "The most Right of the Cadets"—as the semi-Oktoberist Mr. Maklakov was aptly called recently—was quite correct when, speaking on behalf of the Cadets and Oktoberists in the State Duma on February 25, he said that "dissatisfied today are those central elements of the country who most desire stable peace and who fear a new outbreak of revolution." They have one common cry: "everybody says," Mr. Maklakov went on, "that if we continue on the path along which we are now being led, we shall be brought to a second revolution."

The common cry of the Cadet-Octobrist bourgeoisie in the spring of 1911 confirms the correctness of the evaluation of the situation given by our party in the resolution of its December 1908 conference. "The basic economic and political factors which called forth the revolution of 1905," that resolution reads, "continue to operate, and in such an economic and political situation a new revolution must mature inevitably."

Recently, that hired hack of the Black Hundred tsarist government, Menshikov, declared in *Novoye Vremya* that the Reform of February 19 had "failed miserably," because "1861 was unable to prevent 1905." Now the hired lawyers and parliamentarians of the bourgeois liberals declare that the "reforms" of November 9, 1906, and June 3, 1907, are a failure, because these "reforms" *are leading* to a second revolution.

Both these declarations, as also the entire history of the liberal and revolutionary movement in the period 1861-1905, provide most interesting material for an elucidation of the highly important question—the relation of reform to revolution, the role of reformists and revolutionaries in the social struggle.

The foes of revolution—some with hatred and gnashing of teeth, others with bitterness and dejection recognize that the "reforms" of 1861 and 1907-10 are failures because they do not avert revolution. To this Social-Democracy, the repre-

sentative of the only thoroughly revolutionary class of our day, replies: the revolutionaries played a paramount historical role in the social struggle and in all social crises *even when* those crises led immediately only to half-way reforms. The revolutionaries are the leaders of the social forces that are the makers of all reform; reforms are a by-product of the revolutionary struggle.

The revolutionaries of 1861 remained isolated individuals and would seem to have sustained complete defeat. Actually, it was they that were the great leaders of that period, and the farther we recede from it, the clearer becomes their greatness, and the more obvious become the wretchedness and puerility of the liberal reformists of the time.

The revolutionary class of 1905-07, the socialist proletariat, would seem to have sustained complete defeat. Both the liberal monarchists and the quasi-Marxist liquidationists shouted till our ears rang that it had gone "too far," had been guilty of "excesses," had succumbed to the lure of the "spontaneous class struggle," had allowed itself to be tempted by the fatal idea of the "hegemony of the proletariat," and so on and so forth. Actually, the only "guilt" of the proletariat was that it did not go far enough, but that "guilt" is justified by the state of its strength at the time, and is exculpated

by the unremitting revolutionary-Social-Democratic work performed even at the time of the most rabid reaction, by the unyielding struggle against all manifestations of reformism and opportunism. Actually, all that has been conquered from the enemy, and all that is stable in the conquests, has been conquered and is retained only to the extent that the revolutionary struggle is strong and alive in all fields of proletarian work. Actually, it was solely the proletariat that upheld consistent democracy to the end, exposing the utter shakiness of liberalism, wresting the peasantry from its influence, and rising with heroic courage in armed revolt.

It is beyond the power of anyone to predict how far the really democratic reformation of Russia will be carried in the era of her bourgeois revolutions, but it is beyond a shadow of doubt that *only* the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat will determine the degree and success of the reformation. Between feudalistic "reforms" in the bourgeois spirit and a democratic revolution led by the proletariat, there can only be the impotent, spineless and unprincipled vacillations of liberalism and opportunist reformism.

Casting a general glance on the history of the past half-century in Russia, on the year 1861 and the year 1905, we can only reiterate with even greater conviction the words of our party resolution: "the aim of our struggle continues to be

the overthrow of tsarism, the conquest of political power by the proletariat, backed by the revolutionary strata of the peasantry and effecting a bourgeois-democratic revolution through the convocation of a popular constituent assembly and the establishment of a democratic republic."

Sotsial-Demokrat, No. 21-22,
March 19 (April 1), 1911

NOTES

- ¹ V. V.—pseudonym of V. P. Vorontsov. *N—on* or *Nikolai —on*—pseudonym of N. F. Danielson.

Vorontsov and Danielson were prominent ideologists of liberal-Narodism in the 1880-90s. p. 7

- ² *Constitutional-Democratic Party* (abbreviated, Cadets)—the chief bourgeois party in Russia, representing the bourgeois liberal-monarchists; formed in October 1905. Pretending to be democrats, and calling themselves the "people's freedom" party, the Cadets strove to win the support of the peasantry. Their aim was to preserve tsarism in the form of a constitutional monarchy. After the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the Cadets organized counter-revolutionary conspiracies and revolts against the Soviet Republic. p. 15

- ³ *Trudoviks*, or *Trudovaya Gruppya* (Group of Labour)—a group of petty-bourgeois democrats formed in April 1906 by peasant deputies in the First State Duma.

The Trudoviks demanded the abolition of all estate and national disabilities, democratization of the rural and urban local government bodies, and universal suffrage in elections to the State Duma. Their agrarian programme was based on the Narodist principle of equitable landholding and envisaged the formation of a national land fund by the sequestration of the estates of the crown, the royal family and the monasteries, also private estates exceeding a certain area ("labour norm")

with payment of compensation for land confiscated from private owners. The carrying out of the land reform was to be entrusted to local peasant committees. p. 15

- ⁴ *Novoye Vremya*—a daily newspaper published in St. Petersburg from 1868 to October 1917. Originally moderate liberal in trend, towards the close of the 1870s it became an organ of the reactionary nobility and government bureaucracy. It campaigned not only against the revolutionary, but also the bourgeois-liberal movement. From 1905 on, it was a mouthpiece of the Black Hundreds. Lenin called *Novoye Vremya* a model corrupt newspaper. p. 16
- ⁵ *Vestnik Yevropy*—a monthly journal published in St. Petersburg from 1868 to the spring of 1918. It advocated the views of the Russian bourgeois liberals; from the beginning of the 1890s, it systematically campaigned against Marxism. p. 21
- ⁶ *Ryech*—a daily newspaper, central organ of the Cadets, published in St. Petersburg from February 1906, and closed down by the Revolutionary Military Committee of the Petrograd Soviet on October 26 (November 8), 1917. p. 21
- ⁷ The Ukase of November 9 (22), 1906, supplementing existing legislation governing peasant land ownership and tenure, and the Law of June 14 (27), 1910, amending and supplementing the regulations governing peasant land ownership, laid down rules permitting peasants to withdraw from their village communities and convert their allotments into their private property. p. 23
- ⁸ *Russkaya Mysl*—a monthly bourgeois-liberal journal founded in Moscow in 1880. After the 1905 Revolution

it became the organ of the Right-wing Cadets, and in this period was called by Lenin the *Chernosotennaya* [Black Hundred] *Mysl*. It was closed down in mid-1918.
p. 23

⁹ The words of Volgin, hero of Chernyshevsky's novel, *Prologue*.
p. 28

¹⁰ *Octobrists*, or *Union of October 17*—a counter-revolutionary party of the big bourgeoisie industrialists and the big landlords who ran their estates on capitalist lines; founded in November 1905. While pretending to accept the Manifesto of October 17, in which the tsar, scared by the revolution, promised the people civil liberties and a Constitution, the Octobrists unreservedly supported the home and foreign policies of the tsarist government. The leaders of the Octobrists were A. Guchkov, a big manufacturer, and M. Rodzyanko, an owner of vast estates.
p. 29

¹¹ *The coup d'état of June 3 (16), 1907*—a reactionary coup effected by the tsarist government. It dissolved the Second State Duma and amended the regulations governing elections to the Duma. The new electoral law greatly increased the number of representatives of the landlords, merchants and manufacturers, while the representatives of the peasants and workers were reduced to a fraction of their former number, small enough as that had been. The greater proportion of the inhabitants of Asiatic Russia were deprived of the suffrage, and the representation from Poland and the Caucasus was reduced by half. The Third Duma, which was elected on the basis of this law and assembled in November 1907, was composed predominantly of members of the Black Hundreds and the Cadet party.
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